

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

A complete listing of the claims is as follows:

Claim 1. (*Currently Amended*) A device for binding a boot to a sports article, said device comprising:

a retaining system adapted to connect a front of the boot to the sports article and to allow a rear of the boot to be moved with respect to the sports article between a low position and a high position;

an elastic return system for elastic return of the boot to the low position;

the retaining system being independent of ~~distinct from~~ the elastic return system;

the elastic return system comprising at least:

an elastic member to be connected to the sports article; and

a flexible linkage connecting ~~connected to~~ the elastic member ~~to be~~ directly or indirectly to the boot, said flexible linkage cooperating with at least one return member.

Claim 2. (*Currently Amended*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the flexible linkage has, on a first side of the return member, a portion connected to the elastic member and extending in a substantially horizontal direction, and, on a second side of the return member, a portion connected to the boot and extending in a direction substantially parallel to a direction of relative movement of the boot in relation to the binding device.

Claim 3. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the return member comprises a pulley.

Claim 4. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the return member comprises a curved sliding surface on which the flexible linkage takes support and slides.

Claim 5. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the flexible linkage comprises a cable.

Claim 6. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the flexible linkage comprises a traction strip.

Claim 7. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a member for connecting to the boot which is adapted to be connected to the boot;

and

wherein the flexible linkage is connected to the connecting member.

Claim 8. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 7, wherein:

the connecting member comprises a hook connected to the binding device only by means of the flexible linkage, and which is adapted to be connected to a connection bar of the boot.

Claim 9. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 8, wherein:

in the absence of the boot, the hook is automatically returned by means of the elastic return system to a resting position that is predetermined by the cooperation of the hook with complementary shapes ~~forms~~ of the device.

Claim 10. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 9, further comprising:

an opening mechanism that drives the hook from a resting position to a cleared waiting position allowing the positioning of the boot; and

wherein, when the hook returns to the resting position, the connection bar of the boot is arranged on a path ~~the trajectory~~ of the hook to ensure connection to the bar.

Claim 11. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the retaining system comprises a jaw adapted to receive a rod for articulating the boot in the manner of a hinge.

Claim 12. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 7, wherein:

the connecting member is part of the retaining system and is capable of moving in relation to the sports article between a low position and a high position;

the boot is adapted to be connected to the connecting member; and

the flexible linkage of the elastic return system connects the elastic member to the connecting member, in order to return the connecting member and the boot to the low position.

Claim 13. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 12, wherein:

the connecting member is connected to the sports article by a guiding mechanism.

Claim 14. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 13, wherein:

the guiding mechanism comprises at least one rocker bar articulated with respect to the sports article.

Claim 15. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 14, wherein:

the return member comprises a pulley; and

the pulley is coaxial with an axis about which the rocker bar moves in relation to the sports article.

Claim 16. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a base that is affixed to the sports article; and

wherein the elastic member is connected to the sports article by means of the base.

Claim 17. (*Withdrawn*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the connecting member comprises a convex surface that is in support on the sports article.

Claim 18. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, further comprising:

in addition to the elastic return system, a rigid or elastic abutment positioned to act at the end of travel of the boot.

Claim 19. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, further comprising:
a mechanism for adjusting the stiffness of the elastic member.

Claim 20. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 19, wherein:
the mechanism for adjusting the stiffness allows adjusting a more or less substantial prestress of the elastic member.

Claim 21. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:
the return and the end of the flexible linkage that is connected to the boot are arranged at a short distance from one another.

Claim 22. (*Original*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:
the end of the flexible linkage connected to the boot and the return are arranged in the vicinity of the metatarso-phalangeal articulation zone of the user's foot when the boot is in the low position.

Claim 23. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:
said flexible linkage being lengthwise movable relative to the return member during movement of the rear of the boot between the low and high positions.

Claim 24. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:
the flexible linkage extends to the return member in a first direction and extends from the return member in a second direction different from the first direction.

Claim 25. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:
the flexible linkage comprises a flat strip.

Claim 26. (New) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the flexible linkage passes beneath the return member.

Claim 27. (New) A binding device according to claim 1, wherein:

the retaining system is adapted to retain the boot against release from the sports article independent of a connection of the boot to the flexible linkage.

Claim 28. (New) A device for binding a boot to a sports article, said device comprising:

a retaining system adapted to connect a front of the boot to the sports article for use in a sport requiring a rear of the boot to be moved with respect to the sports article repeatedly from a low position and a high position and from the high position to the low position;

an elastic return system for exerting an elastic return force to urge the boot toward the low position, the elastic return system comprising:

at least one elastic member;

a flexible linkage having a first end connected directly or indirectly to the elastic member and a second end adapted to be connected directly or indirectly to the boot, the flexible linkage being movable lengthwise during movement of the rear of the boot between the low and high positions as energy is transferred to and from the elastic member;

a guide for the flexible linkage during the lengthwise movement of the flexible linkage, a portion of the flexible linkage between the first and second ends of the flexible linkage being in engagement with the guide as the boot is moved between the low and high positions;

the retaining system adapted to retain the boot against release from the sports article independent of a connection of the boot to the flexible linkage.

Claim 29. *(New)* A binding device according to claim 28, wherein:

the guide for the flexible linkage is positioned in the binding device to be adapted to be located substantially in an area vertically beneath a metatarso-phalangeal articulation zone of a user's foot.

Claim 30. *(New)* A binding device according to claim 29, wherein:

the guide is positioned rearward less than 3 centimeters of the area vertically beneath a metatarso-phalangeal articulation zone of a user's foot.

Claim 31. *(New)* A binding device according to claim 28, wherein:

the retaining system comprises a fixed jaw and a movable jaw, said jaws adapted to latch a connector of the boot.

Claim 32. *(New)* A binding device according to claim 28, wherein:

the flexible linkage extends to the guide in a first direction and extends from the guide in a second direction different from the first direction.

Claim 33. *(New)* A binding device according to claim 28, wherein:

the flexible linkage comprises a substantially inextensible flat strip.

Claim 34. (*New*) A device for binding a boot to a sports article, said device comprising:

a retaining system adapted to connect a front of the boot to the sports article and to allow a rear of the boot to be moved with respect to the sports article between a low position and a high position;

an elastic return system for elastic return of the boot to the low position;

the retaining system being independent of the elastic return system;

the elastic return system comprising at least:

an elastic member to be connected to the sports article;

a flexible linkage having a first end and a second end, between the elastic member and a connection with the boot, said flexible linkage cooperating with at least one return member;

the second end of the flexible linkage being positioned in the binding device to be adapted to be located substantially in an area vertically beneath a metatarso-phalangeal articulation zone of a user's foot.

Claim 35. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the flexible linkage has, on a first side of the return member, a portion connected to the elastic member and extending in a substantially horizontal direction, and, on a second side of the return member, a portion connected to the boot and extending in a direction substantially parallel to a direction of relative movement of the boot in relation to the binding device.

Claim 36. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the return member comprises a pulley.

Claim 37. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the return member comprises a curved sliding surface on which the flexible linkage takes support and slides.

Claim 38. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the flexible linkage comprises a cable.

Claim 39. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the flexible linkage comprises a traction strip.

Claim 40. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, further comprising:

a member for connecting to the boot which is adapted to be connected to the boot;

and

wherein the flexible linkage is connected to the connecting member.

Claim 41. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 40, wherein:

the connecting member comprises a hook connected to the binding device only by means of the flexible linkage, and which is adapted to be connected to a connection bar of the boot.

Claim 42. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 41, wherein:

in the absence of the boot, the hook is automatically returned by means of the elastic return system to a resting position that is predetermined by the cooperation of the hook with complementary shapes of the device.

Claim 43. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 42, further comprising:

an opening mechanism that drives the hook from a resting position to a cleared waiting position allowing the positioning of the boot; and

wherein, when the hook returns to the resting position, the connection bar of the boot is arranged on a path of the hook to ensure connection to the bar.

Claim 44. (*New*) A binding device according to claim 34, wherein:

the retaining system comprises a jaw adapted to receive a rod for articulating the boot in the manner of a hinge.